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BEETHOVEN'S OWN WORDS



Louy Van Deethoven

BEETHOVEN'S OWN WORDS

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Introduction

Beethoven's Own Words! that seemed to me the most precise title for this little book, in which a choice of thoughts and expressions of the greatest among the great tone poets is collected. Through these "own words" the reader probably comes nearer to Beethoven than through any more extensive work about the Master, of which so many have appeared. Owing to the hindrance he suffered in conversation through his deafness Beethoven was often forced to write down his thoughts. One good aspect for posterity of this malady which made his life so difficult was that Beethoven, in letters, in his "Konversationshefte" *), his "Heiligenstadt Testament" (that deeply

*) These "Konversationshefte" were the writing tablets by which Beethoven helped himself in a conversation. They were preserved in the State Library at Berlin, and comprise more than eleven thousand manuscript pages, for the Beethoven researcher they are of great value.

tragic document, which the suffering genius wrote like a confession to his brothers), his marginal notes on scores and in manuscripts, left material of inestimable value from which we can perhaps best learn to know his genius

When collecting and selecting these words of Beethoven, I was amazed at the large number which are unknown to most of his admirers. These expressions are of the highest importance and interest for a real appreciation and comprehension of the Master, in which the man and the artist are inseparably united. My intention has been to make only a modest selection from the large amount that Beethoven left in manuscript, and with this aim I have in the first place chosen those sayings which struck me as being most characteristic of him in order to press nearer to the essential being of the man and the artist.

Particularly I would draw attention to the fact that I have, so far as possible, retained in the translation the language as used by Beethoven. With Beethoven there is little that can be called "style"; his sentences are often very unbalanced and strangely formed, while the punctuation also leaves much to be desired. This must be the excuse for the fact that the trans-

lation does not always appear as fluent as could be wished.

I hope that the reading and re-reading of these thoughts of the greatest composer of all time may bring many nearer to him and provide the reader with just as many delightful "Hours with Beethoven" as the compiling of this little book has given me.

Ph. K.



About Art and Artistry

Beethoven's position with regard to art was certainly remarkable. Art was to him a goddess whom he worshipped, to whom he was grateful and whom he stood up for. He praised her as his saviour in necessity, for as he himself admitted, the prospect of her consolation prevented his laying violent hands on himself. In his words Art is constantly referred to as the true companion in his walks through wood and meadow, and she was his companion in the loneliness to which he was condemned by his deafness. The conceptions of art and nature were for him closely united, and "natural" applied to his art in the best meaning of the word.

His ideal, high conception of art made him like a fanatic priest striving for the purity of his goddess. All imitation art was to him an atrocity; from this

came all his truculent sallies against self-conscious virtuosity, all attempts from influential quarters to employ art for other than actual artistic purposes. His art repaid this devotion royally; she made his life, often so pitiable, rich through the many hours of the purest joy which she afforded him. And humanity can never be grateful enough to Beethoven that he so constantly held his art high, so that he left in honour of Frau Musica a monument of music such as in all probability will never have a peer.

The world is a king, who desires to be flattered in order to show itself favourable — but true art is self-willed and does not let itself be forced into any flattering form.

"Konversationsheft" March 1820. When Baron van Braun, the Intendant, thought that the opera *Fidelio* would be well received by the audience in the cheaper seats, Beethoven cried out, "I do not write for the gallery". He never made any concessions to popular taste.

Go straight forward, do not only exercise yourself in art, but press forward right through to her being; she deserves it, for art and science alone raise man to a divinity.

Tepitz, 17 July 1812, to his ten year old worshipper, Emilie M., in H

True art remains immortal, and the true artist finds inward pleasure in great spiritual productions.

15 March 1823, to Cherubini in Paris, to whom he wrote very flatteringly, "I place your works higher than all other operas". Cherubini was to act as Beethoven's advocate with King Louis XVIII in order to get his Mass accepted.

As I cast up my eyes, then I have to sigh, for what I see is contrary to my religion, and *that* world I must despise, which does not realise that music is

a higher revelation than all wisdom and philosophy

Said by Beethoven in a conversation with Bettina von Arnim, 1810, about the social life of Vienna (from a letter from Bettina to Goethe of 28 May 1810)

Art! Who understands her? With whom can one talk about this great goddess?

11 Aug 1810, to Bettina von Arnim.

Truth exists for the wise, beauty for a sensitive heart. The two are destined for each other.

In the album of his friend Lenz von Breuning, 1797

I like honesty and openness and am of opinion that an artist should not be stinted, for alas, however brilliant the outward side of fame may be, yet he is not allowed to sit every day on Olympus as guest of Jupiter; alas, the *ordinary* humanity fetches him too often and in a repugnant manner out of these pure etherial heights, below.

5 June 1822, to the music publisher C. F. Peters, at Leipzig, when he was discussing with Beethoven the question of a complete edition of the latter's works

What will people a century hence think of the valued works of our favourite composers? While almost everything disappears through the changes of time and alas, also of the fashion, only the truly good

and entirely true remains fast as a rock, and no criminal hand will ever dare to do it violence. Let each therefore do what is good; strive with all your powers towards this never achievable goal; let each one to his latest breath bring his talents to their development, as the Creator of his goodness has given them to him; for "short is life, art is eternal!"

From the annotations to the theoretical textbook of the Grand Duke Rudolf

You know yourself what a number of years brings in the way of change to an artist who goes constantly forward. The greater the progress one makes in art the less contentment do his earlier works bring to him.

Vienna, 4 Aug. 1800 To Matthison, when Beethoven dedicated to him his composition *Adelaide* "My dearest wish is fulfilled if the musical setting of the heavenly *Adelaide* does not displease you too much"

Most people are moved by something good, but those are no real artist natures; artists are fiery, they do not weep.

Stated by Bettina von Arnim on May 28 1810, to Goethe, to be a saying of Beethoven

To serve as our examples are the composers who in their works unite nature and art.

1824, in Baden, to the Organist Freudenberg from Breslau.

Go forward with the constant higher and higher rise in the heaven of art; there exists no more undisturbed, no more unmixed, purer joy than that which comes from there.

19 Aug 1819, to Xavier Schnyder, who had been received in a friendly manner by Beethoven in 1811, but who could not persuade him to give any theoretical instruction.

The true artist has no pride, he does not see, alas, that art has no limits, he feels vaguely how far he is from his goal, and meanwhile, probably admired by others, he sorrows that he has not yet come to where his better Genius illuminates like a far-off sun.

Tephtz, 17 July 1812, to his ten year old admirer Emilie M., in H.

There are no boundaries placed before talent and industry to warn them: thus far and no further!

Quoted by Schindler

A musician is also a poet, he can feel himself suddenly removed by a pair of eyes to a more beautiful world, where greater spirits plague him and give him much to do.

15 Aug 1812, to Bettina von Arnim.

Freedom, progress is in the world of art just as in all Creation, the goal, and although we newcomers

are not so far advanced in sound qualities as our forefathers, yet the refinement has improved much in our morals.

Modling, 29 July 1819, to the Grand Duke Rudolf.

An organist I place, if he is a master of his instrument, in the highest place among the virtuosi. I myself also played the organ in my youth, but my nerves could not bear the violence of that gigantic instrument.

Baden 1824 In a conversation with the organist Freudenberg from Breslau



*About composing, musical interpretation
and his own works*

Not seldom have the "wiseacres" reproached Beethoven because his compositions were not according to the rules of the art. About such short-sighted pedantry he a number of times spoke a heartfelt word. A very amenable pupil he was not, and particularly in Vienna, where he still, when he already stood much in regard as a pianist, took lessons in composition, amongst others from Albrechtsberger.

With Father Haydn he could not long endure. He studied fugue with particular aversion, that form being for him the symbol of a close constraint which stifled all feeling. He had no respect for bare formalities. Time and time again he emphasised his idea that for an art work the soul, the feelings and impulsiveness were the first things demanded.

Therefore it is not to be wondered at that he sometimes disregarded the traditional forms in sonatas and symphonies. An untameable pressure for freedom marked the man as well as the artist Beethoven, and one finds this great pressure for freedom in all his utterances no matter to what they relate.

So far as I am concerned, yes, good heavens, my kingdom is in the air, just like the wind, the tones often whirl round, and so often it eddies in my soul.

13 Febr 1814, to Count Brunswick

Yes, yes, now they are stupefied and put their heads together because they have not found it in any single theory book!

To Ries, when the critics reproached him with offences against the grammatical rules.

Good song has been my guide; I have tried to write as fluently as possible, and I dare to answer for this before the judgment seat of healthy intelligence and good taste.

From the notes in the textbook of the Grand Duke Rudolf.

Do you really believe that I think of your wretched violin when the Spirit speaks to me?

To his friend, the eminent violinist, Schuppanzigh, when the latter complained of the difficulties of a passage

Many maintain that every minor movement must necessarily end so. Nego! On the contrary I find that just the soft scales of the major at the end are of delightful, uncommonly calming effect. To sorrow follows joy, to rain, sunshine. With this I feel as though

I look towards the mild silver glance of the shining evening star.

From the notes in the textbook of the Grand Duke Rudolf.

Writing, you know quite well, was never anything for me, even my best friends have for years received no letters from me. I live only in my notes, and the one is scarcely finished before the other is already begun. As I now write, I often do three or four things at once

Vienena, 29 June 1800, to Wegeler in Bonn

I am not accustomed to revise my compositions. I have never done it, because I am convinced of the truth that every partial alternation changes the character of the whole composition

19 Feb 1813 to George Thomson, who asked him to make alterations in some of the compositions published by him

These pianists have their well-known clubs, where they often come; there they are praised and always again praised, and all is over with art!

In a conversation with Tomaschek in Oct 1814

No metronome at all! To whoever has the right feeling it is not necessary, and to him who has it not he goes in any case with the whole orchestra.

Recorded by Schindler It appeared the Beethoven himself gave a different metronome marking to the publisher than he had done for the London Philharmonic Society.

One must be something, if one will appear to be something.

15 Aug 1812 to Bettina von Arnim.

My *Fidelio* has not been understood by the public, but I know it will yet be appreciated; but still, although I know quite well what my *Fidelio* is worth I am at the same time equally conscious that the symphony is my actual element. If it sounds in me, then I hear always the full orchestra; instrumentalists I can trust everything to; with vocal compositions I have constantly to ask myself: "Is that singable?"

Statement in 1823 or 1824 to Griesinger

I do not write only that which I most wish to do, but merely for the money which is necessary to me. But it is not to be said, therefore, that I write only for the money. When this period is past, then I hope at last to write what to me is the highest in art. — Faust!

"Konversationsheft", 1823 To Buhler, tutor in a merchant's family, who enquired about an oratorio that had been ordered by Americans in Boston

Sinfonia pastorella. Whoever has a grain of understanding of country life can without much description themselves understand what the composer

wishes. Also without explanation one will realise that the whole is more impression than tone painting.

Remark in the sketches for the "Pastoral" in the Royal Library, Berlin

So far as faults are concerned, for myself I had no need to learn harmony, I had from my youth up such a fine feeling that I brought rules into practice without knowing that it must be so or otherwise.

Note on a page with an indication as to the use of crotchet proportions, perhaps from an exercise book of the Grand Duke Rudolf

That you propose to issue Sebastian Bach's works is something that does good to my own heart, which beats warmly for the great art of this patriarch of harmony, and that I hope soon to see take an easy way.

Jan 1801 To Kapellmeister Hofmeister, Leipzig, of the publishing house Hofmeister and Kuhnel, "Bureau de Musique"

I have written no noisy music. I wish for my instrumental works an orchestra of only about sixty good musicians, because I am convinced that only with this number can the rapidly changing nuances in the interpretation be reflected.

Schindler relates, Nov 1822, that Beethoven during a banquet heard a carillon which played the Overture to *Fidelio*. Beethoven listened and said "That plays better than the Kärntnerthor-Orchestra"

Good Church music should be performed only by voices, with the exception of a "Gloria" or something like that with similar words. Therefore I prefer Palestrina; yet it is foolish to imitate him, without possessing his spirit and religious conception: also for the present day singers it would be impossible to hold the long-drawn-out notes and to sing in tune.

1824, at Baden, in a conversation with the organist Freudenberg from Breslau

God knows why my piano music always makes the worst impression on me, especially when it is badly played.

2 June, 1804, in the sketches for his *Leonore*

The sort is to me a matter of indifference if only the subject attracts me. I must be able to work with heart and soul. Operas such as *Don Juan* and *Figaro* I could not compose. For these I have an aversion. Such matter I could not choose, it is too frivolous for me!

Spring, 1825, to Ludwig Rellstab, who wished to write an opera libretto for Beethoven

I carry my ideas for a long time with me before I write them down; with this my memory remains so alive that I am sure of a theme that I have once taken up into myself, even after years I

shall not forget it. I alter one thing and another, discard and try again, until I am satisfied; but then the working begins in my brain, in the breadth, in the length, the height and depth and with that I am conscious of what I want, so the idea which lies as the foundation never leaves me, it grows upwards, I hear and see the image in its full range standing as one piece before my mind; and then there remains only the work of writing it down, that proceeds quicker according to the time that I can make for it, because sometimes I undertake several works at the same time, but am certain not to confound the one with the other. You will ask me how I come to my ideas? That I cannot say with certainty; they come unsought, indirect, in a direct way, I could seize them with my hand, in free nature, in the forest, on walks, in the silence of the night, in the early morning, aroused by moods, which with a poet are transformed into words, with me into tones, sounding, foaming, steaming, until at last they stand before me as notes.

In a conversation with Schlosser, who as a young musician during a visit to Beethoven in 1822 and 1823, had won the latter's friendship.



About Nature

In his love of nature Beethoven was a veritable son of the Rhineland. As a boy he went with his father for long walks, sometimes for days long "in den mir einig lieben Rheingegenden." Nature was to him in his healthy days a teacher of his art; and he never forgot, even in his latest years, to take his note books with him on his walks

Out there, amid free Nature, he found his delightful themes and motifs; the stream, the birds, the trees sang to him. In some special cases he has even presented them in his music.

Later, when his increasing deafness made contact with his fellow-men more and more difficult, and when at last he could keep intercourse with them only by writing (from this came the frequently cited so-called "Konversationshefte" he fled to na-

ture. There in the woods he became again the child-like, joyful man; nature was to him a sacrament. There fell from his lips the oft-repeated "Holy! Holy!" The wood, the mountain dell, must hear his sighs; there he relieved his oppressed soul.

Upon friends for whom consolation was necessary he pressed the advice to seek forgetfulness in holy nature. Almost every Summer he himself fled from warm, dusty Vienna and sought a quiet spot in the splendid environs. His deepest wish was at some time himself to possess such an idyllic spot.

How happy I am, sometimes to be able to walk through the shrubs, beneath trees, shrubs and rocks; no one can be more fond of the country than I For woods, trees and mountains give to man the resonance which he wishes for himself!

To Baroness von Droszdick

Ah, God! Look at lovely nature and let her give your soul the rest for what must be.

To the "unsterbliche Geliebte" 6 July, (morning, probably 1800), to Countess Giuletta Guicciardi

My wretched hearing does not trouble me here. In the country it is as though I hear every tree saying Holy! Holy! — In the forest only delight, who can describe it all! — sweet silence of the forest!

July 1814, when he had travelled to Baden for the benefit performance of *Fidelio*

You must come to the old ruins, think that Beethoven often tarried there, wander through the mysterious pine woods, and then think that Beethoven often made poetry, or as people say, composed.

Autumn 1817, to Frau von Streicher, who was staying in Baden for the cure.

The weaknesses of nature are given to her by na-

ture itself, and the mistress "Intelligence" must be able to lead and to reduce them through her strength.

Diary, 1817

Nature knows no standing still; hand in hand with her walks the real art, whose sister is called: Virtuosity; against which heaven defend us!

From notes in the textbook of the Grand Duke Rudolf. Prior to this there had been a conversation as to the expressive possibilities of music.



About himself and others

It would not be easy to get a true image of Beethoven's character and inward nature otherwise than through the written sayings which he has left us. His honest character, that open-heartedness which he demanded of himself and which he also wished for from others, which could sometimes make him rough and ill mannered; that guarantees that he did not wish to present himself more favourably than he was. We may take it — as he shortly before his death said to his confidants Schindler and Breuning, when he had given them information for his biography, "Before all strictly the truth, for that I hold you both responsible" — that his own information with regard to himself is in every respect absolutely true.

The carelessness and liveliness which characterised

Beethoven in his youth, gave place, alas, with the advance of his ear trouble, to hypochondria, reserve, and more especially to suspicion, a characteristic of many deaf people, which it is easy to understand. Beethoven, as the complaint became worse, got more and more distrustful, and he imagined that even in the slightest household matters he was being spied upon by members of the family, friends, publishers and servants.

Yet his life, through the high conception which he had of it, was imbued with a powerful idealism, which, notwithstanding daily miseries, was a witness to the great love of mankind in general and of his unsympathetic nephew in particular. Sometimes in relation with his publishers he appears to be avaricious, and endeavours to scrape together all he can; but that is only that he might leave his nephew after his death without material cares.

Never, from my earliest youth upwards, in my efforts to serve poor humanity with my art, did I allow myself, to make up to myself through something else, for that requires nothing else than the inward feeling of goodwill which constantly accompanies such deeds.

To the lawyer Barensa, who asked for a composition for a charity concert at Graz

Never, never will you find me ignoble. — From my youth onward I learnt to love virtue, and all that is beautiful and good.

To Madame Marie Bigot, about 1808

I know no excellences of mankind except those which make of him a better man; where I find these, there is my fatherland

Teplitz, 17 July 1812, to his ten year old admirer, Emilie M., in H.

I hope to bring still greater works into the world and then as an old child somewhere among good people to bring my earthly career to an end.

7 Oct 1826, to Wegeler

O, you people who regard me as inimical, surly or misanthropical or branded, what an injustice you do me. You do not know the secret cause of that which so appears to you. My heart and my soul were from

my youth up seeking tender benevolence; and even to do great deeds, to that was I constantly disposed.

6 Oct. 1802 to his brother Karl in his "Heiligenstadt Testament".

Handel is the unequalled Master! Go and learn with what small means such great effects can be achieved.

Reported by Seyfried On his death-bed Beethoven said to the little Gerhard von Breuning, when he had just got Handel's works as a present, 'Handel is the greatest, cleverest composer, from him I can still learn Bring me the books here'

I have always reckoned myself among the greatest venerators of Mozart, and I shall remain so until my latest breath

6 Feb. 1826, to the Abbe Maximilian Stadler, who had sent him his essay on Mozart's Requiem

Everyday brings me nearer to the goal to which I aim but cannot describe. Only in that can your Beethoven live. Nothing about rest! — I know nothing else except sleep and it gives me enough pain to know that I must give him more than formerly.

16 Nov 1800 (or 1801?) to Wegeler. Beethoven underlined heavily the line in Homer's "Odyssey", "Sleep too is harmful".

It is a strange feeling to see and hear one's self

praised, and then to feel one's own weaknesses as I do. Such occasions I regard constantly as admonitions to approach the unachievable goal that art and nature offer us. How difficult is that.

To Mlle. de Gerardi, who had sung his praise in a poem.

The most beautiful themes stole then out of your glances into my heart, which will delight the world only when Beethoven no longer conducts.

13 Aug 1812, to Bettina von Arnim

I have never thought of writing for fame and honour. What I have in my heart must come out, and therefore I write.

In a conversation with Karl Czerny, told by the latter in his autobiography

Perhaps the only sign of genius I have is that my affairs are not always in the best order; and yet none but myself is able to help with them.

22 April, 1801, to the Kapellmeister and publisher Hofmeister in Leipzig, when he excused himself for not sending certain compositions

I am free from all petty vanity; only Divine Art, alone in her are the levers which give me the power

to offer the best part of my life to the Heavenly Muses.

9 Sept., 1824, to Hans Georg Nägeli at Zurich.

With people who will not believe in me because I have not yet become generally famous I will and *can* not associate.

About 1798 to Prince Lobkowitz, in whose salon someone had not greeted him with the distinction he thought proper

I shall endeavour to resist fate, I shall certainly not be altogether cast down — Oh, it is delightful, to live our life a thousand times.

16 Nov 1801 (or 1800), to Wegeler.

Snatch not away the laurel wreaths from Handel, Haydn and Mozart; they are their due, but not yet mine.

Tepitz, 17 July, 1812, to the ten year old Emilie M., in H., who had sent him a portfolio she had made herself

Merely to live in your art however confined your knowledge may be, this is still the only existence for you.

Diary, 1816.

For me there exists no greater pleasure than to exercise my art and to display it.

16 Nov 1801 (or 1800?), to Wegeler

For me the rest of company, an intelligent conversation, mutual exchange of thoughts, is denied; nearly always lonely, I can only in the utmost need mix with people; I have to live as an exile.

6 Oct. 1802, in the Heiligenstadt Testament.

Truly in Schubert dwells a divine spark!

In a conversation with Schindler, when the latter showed Beethoven some songs of Schubert's.

Cherubini is among all living composers the one who merits the most attention. Even with his conception of the Requiem I can entirely associate myself and I shall, if I should ever have occasion to write one myself, take over much exactly as he has written it.

Remark by Beethoven reported by Seyfried He said almost the same to the Englishman Cipriani Potter

Whoever studies Clementi thoroughly has at the same time learnt Mozart and other composers, but the reverse is not the case.

Reported by Schindler.

Prince, what you are, that you are by chance and birth; what I am, that I am of myself, and thou-

sands will come, but there is only one Beethoven.

According to tradition, in a letter which he wrote when full of rage to Prince Lichnowsky, when this latter during a visit to his estate near Gratz (in Silesia) wished to force him to play for French officers

There is much to do on earth; do it quickly! — Not to continue my ordinary life as now, art also desires this offering — let recreation alone in order to work all the harder!

Diary, 1814.

It is my honest desire that whatever may be said about me, shall be completely according to the truth, whether another for a moment feels hurt, or even if it should concern myself.

Reported by Schindler, who also tells that Beethoven in the last week before his death said to him and Breuning, when giving particulars for his biography, "Before all strictly the truth, for that I hold you both responsible".

Cramer! Cramer! We shall never be in a position to make anything like that!

In a conversation with Cramer, when they together, during a concert in the "Augarten", heard the Concerto in C minor by Mozart.

I have the gift of being able to hide and suppress my feelings in a number of matters, but if I am once irritated at a moment when I am more susceptible

to passion, then I burst out more heftily than anyone.

24 July 1804 to Ries, whom he informed of his disagreement with Stephen von Breuning

All my mornings I pass with the Muses — and they make me so happy during the walk.

12 Oct 1825, from Baden to his nephew.

He also is nothing more than an ordinary person. Now will he tread under foot all the rights of man, merely to give way to his ambition; he will place himself above all others and become a tyrant

With these words, as Ries, an eyewitness, tells, Beethoven tore the title page from the score of the *Eroica* (with the dedication to Napoleon Bonaparte), when he heard that Napoleon had proclaimed himself Emperor

Of Emmanuel Bach's works I possess only a few, and yet several of them must serve every true artist certainly not only for a high pleasure but also for study, and it is my greatest pleasure to play works which I have never or only seldom seen, to a number of true artist friends

26 July, 1809, to Gottfried Haertel of Leipzig, from whom Beethoven asked all the scores of Haydn, Mozart and the two Bachs (J. S. and C. P. E)

As the undersigned has always lived not so much

for the gaining of a livelihood; but rather his interest in art, the ennobling of taste and the pressure of his genius towards higher ideals and towards perfection have served as the guiding line of his career, from that it cannot be otherwise then that he has often had to sacrifice gain and advantages to the Muse.

L. v a n B e e t h o v e n.

Dec. 1804, to the Management of the Court Theatre, during negotiations for an engagement which, however, never materialised.



The Sufferer

His ear-trouble brought much pain to Beethoven and made his life an unending torment, and sometimes an unbearable suffering, to such an extent that he saw a redemption only in death. "Now an evil devil has come to embitter my life," he wrote to Wegeler, "my hearing has already during three years been getting less and it is said that the evil has its origin in my abdominal trouble, which, as you know, I already had before, but which here has become still worse."

Further in the same letter to Wegeler Beethoven says: "To give you an idea of my remarkable deafness I can tell you that in the theatre I have to lean close to the orchestra in order to understand anything of the piece."

Beethoven himself calls his deafness remarkable be-

cause he sometimes thought he could hear better; some, however, were of opinion that this must be ascribed to his great will power, which was so strong that with it he could make his auditory organs hear more than actually they could.

Already in 1816 he could not longer conduct, and in 1824 he was so deaf that he could not hear the applause of a crowded hall. He became moody towards his best friends, yes, he was even gruff and ill-mannered towards them, but quickly overloaded them with moving friendship. To the end of his life he remained a victim of his passionate character.

His being rocked constantly between two extremes, and the daemoniacal power which caused these disturbances of his mind, was rooted in his ear trouble.

God, Thou lookest down on my inmost being, Thou knowest that charity and compassion dwell therein. O you people, when once you read this, think that you have done me a wrong; and who is unfortunate, he may console himself in having found a companion in distress, who in spite of all obstacles of nature has yet done all that lay in his power to be taken into the line of worthy artists and men

6 Oct 1802, in the Heiligenstadt Testament"

It is no consolation for better people to tell them that others also suffer, mere comparisons one must not make, and therefore one discovers that we all suffer, err, only in a different manner.

1816 to Countess Erdody, on the death of her son.

If I had not read somewhere that human beings may not leave this life voluntarily so long as one can do one good deed, then I should long ago not have been here, — through myself. O, how beautiful is life, but with me it is always poisoned.

2 May 1810 to his friend Wegeler, when he complained about "the demon, which has erected his tents in my ears"

You can scarcely imagine how lonely, how sad I have been in my life during two years; my weakening hearing rose up before me like a ghost wherever I went, and I fled the people, I must have

appeared almost as a misanthropist, and am so little of it.

16 Nov 1801 (or 1800?) to Wegeler, when he wrote to him of his unfortunate love affair, "Alas, she is not in my class".

I can say I spend my life miserably; for two years almost I avoided all company because it is not possible to tell the people I am deaf. If only I had another vocation it would go better, but in my trade it is a terrible position, and with this my enemies, whose number is not small, what would they say of it!

Vienna, 29 June 1800 to Wegeler in Bonn, "I trust it to you alone as a secret"

God, Who knows my inward being and knows how I fulfil my duties which God and nature impose, will at the last relieve me of these adversities.

Unter-Dobling, 18 July 1821, to the Grand Duke Rudolf

The best thing for keeping you from thinking of your complaint is activity.

Note in the Diary, 1812—1818

With joy I hasten to meet Death — even if he comes before I have had the chance to develop all my artistic talents, so will he in spite of my hard lot yet not come too soon, and I should wish him later — but even then I am content, for he frees me from

endless suffering! Come when you will, I step bravely to meet you!

6 Oct. 1802 in the "Heiligenstadt Testament"

You must be no man for yourself, only for others; for you exists no more happiness than in yourself, in your art — O God, give me power to overcome myself; nothing must bind me to life.

In the beginning of the Diary, 1812—1818.

I have often cursed my existence; Plutarch has brought me to contentment. I will, if it is otherwise possible, defy my fate, although there will be moments of my life in which I shall be the most unlucky of God's creatures. Contentment! what a miserable refuge, and for me that is all the remains over! —

Vienna, 29 June 1800, to Wegeler in Bonn

The cherished hope that after this I may improve and at least to a certain point be cured — this I must give up entirely, just as the Autumn leaves fall and wither, so things have become dry to me. Almost as I came here I go away again, even the great courage that often inspired me in the splendid Summer days has disappeared!

6 Oct 1802, in the "Heiligenstadt Testament". Beethoven had taken the cure in Heiligenstadt.

No, friendship and such feelings have for me nothing but wounds. — Let it be so, for your poor Beethoven exists no happiness from outside; you must do everything for yourself, even in the ideal world you find no friends!

About 1808 to Baron von Gleichenstein, by whom he felt he was pushed back

What an humiliation, if someone standing next to me hears a whistle in the distance and *I hear nothing*, or someone hears a shepherd singing and *again I hear nothing*, — such happenings brought me almost to despair; it was a narrow thing that I did not put an end to my life — only she, *Art*, she alone held me back from it.

6 Oct 1802, in the "Heiligenstadt Testament"

Forced to the idea of a *continuing* complaint, born with a fiery, lively temperament, even susceptible to sociability, I had early to draw back from society and pass my life in loneliness.

6 Oct 1802, in the "Heiligenstadt Testament"

If I could utter my ideas about my sickness through the same signs as my ideas in music I should quickly help myself.

Sept 1812 to Amalia Sebald, who stayed at Teplitz at the same time as he.

Patience, — that is the order which must henceforth lead me, and I have it. — For ever I hope, and I am decided to persist until it pleases the fatal Sisters to cut the thread, perhaps it will improve; perhaps not; I am prepared.

6 Oct 1802, in the "Heiligenstadt Testament"

It was impossible for me to say to the people, speak louder, shout, for I am deaf; ah, how could it be possible to acknowledge the weakness of a sense that should be better with me than with others, a sense that I once possessed in the highest possible perfection, as perfectly as few even in my own profession possess or have possessed.

6 Oct. 1802, in the "Heiligenstadt Testament".



The Philosopher

As concerns Beethoven's relation to God, he was like a child to his beloved father, to whom he trusted all his joy and sorrow. He was a through-and-through religious person, without following any denomination. Brought up in the Catholic faith, he early came to an entirely independent conception about religious matters, and when he later composed his great Mass in honour of his so highly valued pupil the Grand Duke Rudolf, he gave it forms which deviated from the ritual, freedom at all costs was Beethoven's rule of life.

On his deathbed Beethoven agreed that a priest should be sent for, and eye-witnesses averred that the ceremony was very edifying and that Beethoven thanked the clergyman heartily. When he had left,

however, Beethoven said: "Plaudite, amici, comoedia finita est," the well-known words with which the classical dramas ended.

He has been reproached for having compared the holy rite with a stage play, but his attitude during its progress was completely at variance with this idea. It is much more likely that he considered his *life* as a drama, and it was in this sense that those present regarded his words. Schindler lays special emphasis on this in a letter from this time, in which he says: "The last days were particularly remarkable, and with truly Socratic philosophy and quietness of spirit he went to meet death."

Beethoven died on March 26, 1827, at a quarter to six in the evening, just as a tremendous shower of hail and heavy thunder broke. His last movement was the raising of his closed fist with the first peal of thunder.

I have no friend; I must live by myself; I know, however, that God is nearer to me than to others, I go without fear to Him, I have constantly recognised and understood Him; I am also not afraid for my music, that can suffer no bad fate; whoever makes himself understandable, he must be freed from all the misery with which others drag along.

To Bettina von Arnim (Letter from Bettina to Goethe, 28 May 1810)

Resignedly I will submit myself to all changes and only on Your immovable goodness, O God, will I place my whole trust.

Diary, 1812.

Nothing higher exists than to approach God more than other people and from that to extend His glory among humanity.

Aug. 1823, to the Grand Duke Rudolf.

Each day on which we have learnt nothing useful is lost. Humanity possesses nothing nobler and more precious than time; therefore: put not off till to-morrow what you can do to-day.

From the notes in the theory textbook of the Grand Duke Rudolf.

Formerly I was rash in my judgments and through this made enemies — now I judge no one any longer,

and that because I will not injure them, and finally I think in myself, if it is something good, then it will maintain itself notwithstanding all enmities and envy; if it is not good, not continuing, then it falls apart however much one may support it.

In a conversation with Tomaschek in Oct, 1814

I cultivate hope, she cultivates half the world, and I have had her as a neighbour all my life long; what otherwise would have come of me!

11 Aug., 1810, to Bettina von Arnim.

Display your power, Fate! We are not masters of ourselves; what is fated must happen, and so Amen!

Diary, 1812—1818

We transitory beings with the immortal spirit are born only for joy and sorrow, and one can almost say: the best receive joy through sorrow.

19 Oct, 1815, to Countess Erdödy at Iedlersee.

I have turned my look upwards — but man is often forced because of himself and others, and then he must bow down; but that also belongs to the destiny of humanity.

8 Feb, 1823, to Zelter. This concerns the purchase of a copy of his "Mass"

Art, the persecuted, finds everywhere a place of refuge; Daedalus, when he was enclosed in the labyrinth in any case discovered the wings which raised him into the sky. — O, I also shall find these wings..

19 Feb., 1812, to Zmeskall, when in the year 1811 through the financial arrangement in Austria the value of money was reduced to one fifth and the price of the pension paid by the Grand Duke Rudolf and the Princes Lobkowitz and Kinal was by this reduced to 800 guilders.

True friendship can alone be based on the connection of similar natures.

Diary, 1812—1818.

Even the most sacred friendship can often have secrets, but to take it amiss because a friend cannot immediately guess it — that you must not do

To Frau Marie Bigot, about 1808.

Nothing is so good as having a good soul, which one recognises in everything and about which one has no need to hide anything

15 Aug., 1812, to Bettina von Arnim

Nothing is more effective in making others practise obedience than to make them believe that one has much more intelligence than they. Without tears

parents cannot imprint virtue in their children, nor the teachers bring to their pupils the useful matters of the sciences, also the laws force the citizens to live according to righteousness, by making them shed tears.

Diary, 1815.

Teach your children to practice virtues, these alone can make them happy, not money. I speak from experience, this was it that enabled me to stand fast in misery; next to my art I have to thank her that my life did not end in suicide.

6 Oct. 1802, in his "Heiligenstadt Testament", to his brothers Karl and Johann.

The drop of water in the end hollows out the stone, not by violence, but because it falls often. Only by untiring industry is knowledge obtained so that one can rightly say: no day may go by unused: nulla dies sine linea.

1799, from the notes in the theory textbook of the Grand Duke Rudolf

Just as the State has a constitution (rule of life) so must each individual person have one for himself.

Diary, 1815.

Blessed is he who has conquered all passions and then with his full power turns to deeds in his life work, unconcerned as to the result! Let the motives lie in the deed and not in the result. Do not be one of those whose motive force is in doing with the hope of reward. Do not let your life pass by in idleness. Be active and fulfil your duty, ban all ideas as to whether consequences and results are good or bad, for such equanimity is giving attention to the immaterial. Seek then a refuge alone in wisdom, for the miserable and the unhappy are only that through the results of things. The truly wise do not trouble about good and evil in this world. Be zealous therefore in fulfilling this habit of the intelligence, for such a habit is in life a precious art.

In the diary, from several awkward turns of the sentences it appears that these are indeed Beethoven's own words, probably occasioned by a passage which struck him in some (unknown) work.



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